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AUTHOR Norr, James L.
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ABSTRACT

Until recently most of the research on college student protest of the 1960's has taken either a political socialization or cultural-historical perspective. The research reported here takes an organizational perspective with the expectation that an examination of student protest should contribute to a theory of organizations. Two classes of structural variables are indicated: (1) quality, autonomy and parochialism; and (2) recruitment and mobilization. These variables can be seen as providing a characterization of the relations of a college or university as an organization to other organizations in its environment. Organized student protest is conceptualized as a characteristic of an organization and it is suggested that major variables accounting for the presence of protest are the level of intolerance and the level of political activity. These two variables in turn are determined by relations of the focal organization to other organizations. Although the model does not provide perfect prediction, it was found that higher quality, secular, and larger colleges and universities are characterized by tolerance and political activity. It is concluded that an organizational perspective leads to greater understanding of protest behavior, and an examination of such behavior contributes to the understanding of organizations. (Author/HS)

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A CONTRIBUTION TO A THEORY OF ORGANIZATIONS: AN EXAMINATION OF STUDENT PROTEST

James L. Norr

Department of Sociology

University of Illinois at Chicago Circle

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Until recently most of the research on college student protest of the 1960's has taken either a political socialization or cultural-historical perspective, asking questions like "what makes a student activist? or "what cultural factors can account for differences in the level of student political activity at different time periods or in different societies?" The research reported here (see Norr, 1971, for a more detailed and complete report) takes an organizational perspective with the expectation that an examination of student protest should contribute to a theory of organizations.

One can view student protest as a property of a formal organization, a characteristic of a college or university. If this is a meaningful approach, we should find that campuses experiencing protest should also be characterized by other similar behaviors that are activist political expressions. That is the case. Colleges experiencing protest in 1964-65 were also more likely to have students involved in Civil Rights activities and also had a greater proportion of undergraduates involved in the Peace Corps (correlations on the order of .2 to .5). There is also some evidence of correlation over time. In 1934-35 there were a large number of pacifist protests on college campuses (Wechsler, 1935; There are some questions regarding the completeness of this data.). Sixty per cent of the colleges reported as having a demonstration in 1934-35 had a protest about war in 1964-65 as contrasted with 16 per cent for those without an earlier demonstration. This evidence tends to support the notions that the probability of collective political action is a fairly stable characteristic of a college or university, that currently valid explanations of protest should be applicable at other time periods, and that we should look for explanatory

variables among other organizational characteristics.

Another aspect of the organizational perspective is useful in focusing our search for organizational characteristics capable of explaining college student protest. When we talk about student protest we refer to the activity of a bounded group of people interacting in concert directed toward a goal, or, in other words, an organization. The task of explanation is to account for the emergence of organizations of a particular type, namely, organized student protest.

INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS

Two main sociological explanations of the emergence of organization - conflict theory and collective behavior theory - both seem to point to the importance of two internal organizational factors: the prevalence of norms of tolerance and opportunities for previous political activity. With few exceptions available data confirm the hypotheses linking campus norms of tolerance and political activity with protest.

Political Activity is positively associated with Protest; the more institutionalized or established political activities are present on a campus, the more likely is the campus to experience protest. Having political and controversial speakers on campus, participating in student political organizations, and engaging in civil rights activity in the South (these indicators constitute the index of Political Activity) all provide the necessary political experience for students, without which protest is unlikely. A protest is a political organization to at least some minimal degree. As such it is necessary to have available people who can fill various leadership and other organizational roles. The more political activity present on a campus, the more likely it is that such people will be available. Political activity also provides an opportunity to work out and sensitize people to a set of beliefs and ideologies. Without such a shorthand way of perceiving

events and attaching blame to an appropriate other party, collective political action seems less likely to occur. In addition to providing training in political organization roles and relevant ideologies, experience in campus political activities can also be seen as providing occasions for students to act as a group and become aware of a collective identity. The more political activity there is on a campus, the greater the available number of students accessible for political mobilization.

Intolerance is negatively associated with both Political Activity and with Protest. The greater the number of rules against political acts or prohibitions against the presence of political organizations or personalities on campus (combined to measure norms of Intolerance) the less the level of Political Activity and the less likely is Protest to occur. Protest does not occur at the most politically repressive colleges. Where administrators don't think student organizations should publicly avow unpopular viewpoints or engage in political actions, or where the appearance of controversial speakers is questioned, or where the more extreme student political organizations are not permitted, there is less Political Activity and less Protest. A political response will only take place if it will not incur high costs. In other words, if the perceived sanctions of the organization for acting are too great, students (or any other group) will not act.

One of the major conclusions from the data is that the major effect of Intolerance on Protest is through Political Activity; in other words, most of the effect is indirect. (This interpretation depends on the assumptions that Intolerance is causally prior to both Political Activity and Protest and that Political Activity is causally prior to Protest.) When one subtracts the effect of Intolerance on Political Activity from the overall effect of Intolerance on Protest, the remaining net effect is rather small. It appears

that the level of political sanctions at a college can influence the probability of student protest mainly by affecting the amount of the more institutionalized forms of political activity. If the administration makes the costs of engaging in political activity high, then there is likely to be no political activity and consequently no protest. Differences in Intolerance (as it has been measured in this study) do not seem to have much of an independent influence on Protest.

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

When we turn to the problem of explaining difference levels of Intolerance, Political Activity, and Protest present on campuses, two sets of organizational characteristics turn out to be important.

Structural factors of Quality, Autonomy, and Parochialism directly influence Intolerance, directly influence Political Activity, and indirectly, through Intolerance and Political Activity, influence Protest. The most important of these factors are AAUP Average Salary Level, location in the South, and Catholic control indicators of quality and parochialism. Two indicators of autonomy, the per cent of out-state students and the per cent of the college budget derived from federal funds, show relationships in the predicted negative direction, but the differences are not as large as those for quality and parochialism. Contrary to expectations, public and private colleges were not noticeably lower in Intolerance, nor were Protestant, technical or teachers' colleges higher. However, another measure of parochialism, the per cent of majors in professional, education or technical fields does show a positive association with Intolerance. While the data do not support all of the specific hypotheses, there is general support for low autonomy, low quality and greater parochialism being associated with greater Intolerance.

We see the level of Intolerance on a campus as a manifestation of values of the faculty and administrators and autonomy, quality and parochialism as determining, in part, the nature of the values present on a campus. The

absence of sanctions for student political acts represents a commitment to values tolerant of dissent and accepting, if not encouraging, the questionning of existing organizations and social practices. These values are more likely to be present at the stronger, higher quality and nationally oriented universities and colleges. At these institutions the continually questionning stance of the intellectual with its associated tendency to reject the status quo is institutionalized. Commitment to tolerance is positively associated with the status and power of organizations in the American system of higher education (see Stinchcombe, 1968 for more on the correlation concept of institutions).

Another set of structural characteristics, Recruitment and Mobilization factors, have little or no direct relation to Intolerance but do have a direct influence on Political Activity and, through Political Activity, indirectly influence Protest. These characteristics affect the presence of numbers of activist students and the ease with which organizations can act politically. Student body size is by far the most important variable in this group. The larger the student body, the greater the possibility of having a group of politically active students. Greater diversity of political views is associate with greater size, so that issues around which groups can mobilize are more likely to emerge.

Previous research on student activists has shown them to be disproportionately recruited from the better students, those majoring in the social sciences and humanities, and those from middle and upper class families. Like their faculty counterparts, these groups have a greater commitment to intellectual values and to questionning the status quo. The data of our study show some support for the notion that colleges likely to recruit these students are more likely to have greater Political Activity and Protest. We find Political Activity to be positively associated with entrance test

scores (brighter students), per cent majoring in social sciences and humanities, and proportion of annual income derived from endowment (colleges which upper class students attend).

Schools with higher tuition and fees were also thought to recruit upper status students and thus have more political activity, but there is no clear support for this relationship. Other factors were also thought to contribute to the ease of mobilization: location in a larger city which would increase the probability of outside support, greater research involvement which tends to focus more attention on politically relevant issues, and the percentage of student not living on campus which was thought to affect communication among students such that separate groups were more likely to arise. Research activity and size of city have slight positive correlations with Political Activity, but their effects controlling for other variables are in the hypothesized direction but too small to conclude that they have independent effects. In the case of research activity, this is partly because research is also associated with student body size, faculty quality and federal support. Levels of Political Activity associated with differences in the per cent of students on campus tend to be opposite to our original hypothesis, but the sizes of the relationships are so small that no confident generalizations can be made one way or the other.

In terms of the indicators we have been able to assemble, ease of political mobilization turns out to be mostly an effect of student body size. There are also other characteristics of colleges and universities that make for the presence of activities, but size seems to be the most important. Size is thus the single most important and best predictor of the level of Political Activity at a college or university.

SUMMARY

We have indicated two classes of structural variables - Quality, Autonomy, and Parochialism - and Recruitment and Mobilization. They can be seen as providing a characterization of the relations of a college or university as an organization to other organizations in its environment. We have conceptualized organized student Protest as a characteristic of an organization and have suggested that major vaiables accounting for the presence of Protest are two other characteristics of the organization -- the level of Intolerance and the level of Political Activity. These two variables in turn are determined by relations of the focal organization to other organizations. In other words, we are making the case that our problem can be seen as one in which inter-organizational relations determine internal organizational behavior

The model does not provide perfect prediction pointing out the need for future research. The effect of structural variables on Protest is not completely explained by Intolerance and Political Activity indicating the usefulness of including additional variables characterizing internal organizational states.And internal protest issues such as student power are less well accounte for than external issues such as War-Peace. However, the basic findings are clear; and these findings are very similar to those of Lazarsfeld and Thielens (1958) for social scientists at American colleges in the 1950's. They too find that higher quality, secular, and larger colleges and universities are characterized by tolerance and political activity. It seems reasonable to conclude that an organizational perspective leads to greater understanding of protest behavior, and an examination of such behavior contributes to our understanding of organizations.

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Accounting for Variation in Protest and Political Activity among Colleges & Universities
(Based on the results of Multiple Classification Analysis, N=830)

Per Cent Variation in Protest

Variable[a]	Total		Net of Preceding Variables		Net of Folowing Variables	
	Protest on All Issues	Protest on War Issues	Protest on All Issues	Protest on War Issues	Protest on All Issues	Protest on War Issues
Political Activity	9.7	31.1	-	-	1.0	8.7
Intolerance	4.0	6.2	.6	.5	1.1	.5
Structural Characteristics Recruitment & Mobilization and Quality, Autonomy & Parochialism	16.6	32.4	8.4	10.0	-	-
All Variables	18.7	41.6	-	-	-	-

Per Cent Variation in Political Activity

	Total	Net of Preceding Variables	Net of Folowing Variables
Intolerance	19.8	-	1.4
Recruitment & Mobilization	48.2	32.1	13.3
Quality, Autonomy & Parochialism	41.9	4.7	-
All Variables	56.6	-	-

[a] See text for descriptions of variables